

A Washington Without Poverty and Injustice

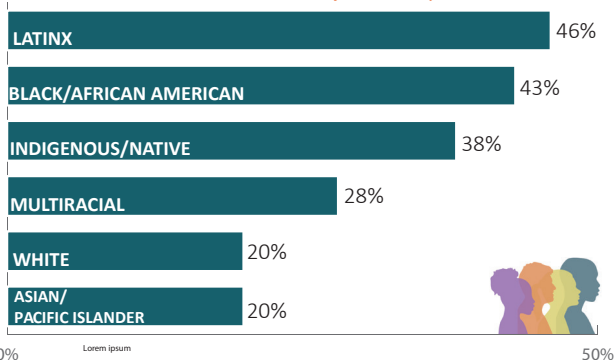
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
Economic Services Administration

A Washington Without Poverty and Injustice

ESA transforms lives by connecting children, adults and families to the resources and opportunities that help them reach their full potential in life. A strong foundation of trusting relationships, a safe and stable home, abundant and nutritious food, with the building blocks of opportunity we all need to succeed – a high-quality education from cradle to career, a job that pays a living wage and healthy communities to support how we live, love, work and play. ESA works with state and local partners to provide essential services like cash, food, medical and housing assistance as well as education, employment and job training opportunities to two million Washingtonians annually.

The sheer number of Washingtonians served by ESA each year is indicative of deeper, systemic challenges – too many Washingtonians are living on a faulty foundation that threatens our collective well-being and progress as a state. **In 2020, just prior to the economic consequences of COVID-19, over 1.4 million Washingtonians were unable to meet their most foundational needs, such as food, housing, child care, and health care.¹** Indigenous, Black and Brown communities experience the undue burden of poverty in our state, and structural racism intersects with other forms of systemic inequality to produce disparities in poverty rates among single parents with young children, youth, the LGBTQ community, rural families, people with disabilities, and immigrants and refugees. **The majority of households living below the Self-Sufficiency Standard have at least one adult working.²**

PERCENT OF WASHINGTONIANS LIVING BELOW THE SELF-SUFFICIENCY STANDARD BY RACE/ETHNICITY, 2020



86% OF HOUSEHOLDS LIVING BELOW SELF-SUFFICIENCY STANDARD HAVE AT LEAST ONE WORKING ADULT, 2020



ESA 2025 Goal and State Poverty Reduction Efforts

Systemic poverty, structural racism and inequality undermine the well-being of children, adult, and families, preventing us from reaching our full potential as a state. Indeed, the weight of the evidence shows there is a causal relationship between income, poverty and negative child outcomes in education, health, juvenile and criminal justice, child welfare and future employment.³ The cost of child poverty is so great that estimates suggest that every \$1 spent on reducing it yields \$7 in return. **The well-established benefits of reducing poverty and inequality inspired ESA in DSHS to establish a 2025 goal to reduce poverty by half in a way that eliminates disparities.**

As part of our 2025 goal efforts, we are proud to co-lead Governor Inslee's Poverty Reduction Work Group, which recently created the 10-year Plan to Dismantle Poverty in Washington: A Blueprint for a Just and Equitable Future (available at www.dismantlepovertyinwa.com). The eight strategies and 60 recommendations in the 10-year Plan are data-driven and grounded in evidence and informed by a steering committee consisting of people experiencing poverty, whose expertise guided our priorities. **As Washington continues to meet the demands brought by COVID-19, the 10-year Plan serves a blueprint for an equitable economic recovery and long-term economic growth.**

More information:

Lori Pfingst, Senior Director
Email: PRWG@dshs.wa.gov
DismantlePovertyinWA.com

2021-23 Priorities to Achieve the 2025 Goal

Investments in health and human services are essential to an equitable economic recovery and long-term, inclusive economic growth. It is essential that Washington state leverage all federal and state resources to mitigate the economic downturn on children, adults and families, and make a sizable down payment on an equitable and inclusive economy in the long-term.

ESA priorities for the upcoming legislative and budget cycle include:



8 STRATEGIES POVERTY REDUCTION

ROOT CAUSES & BEYOND

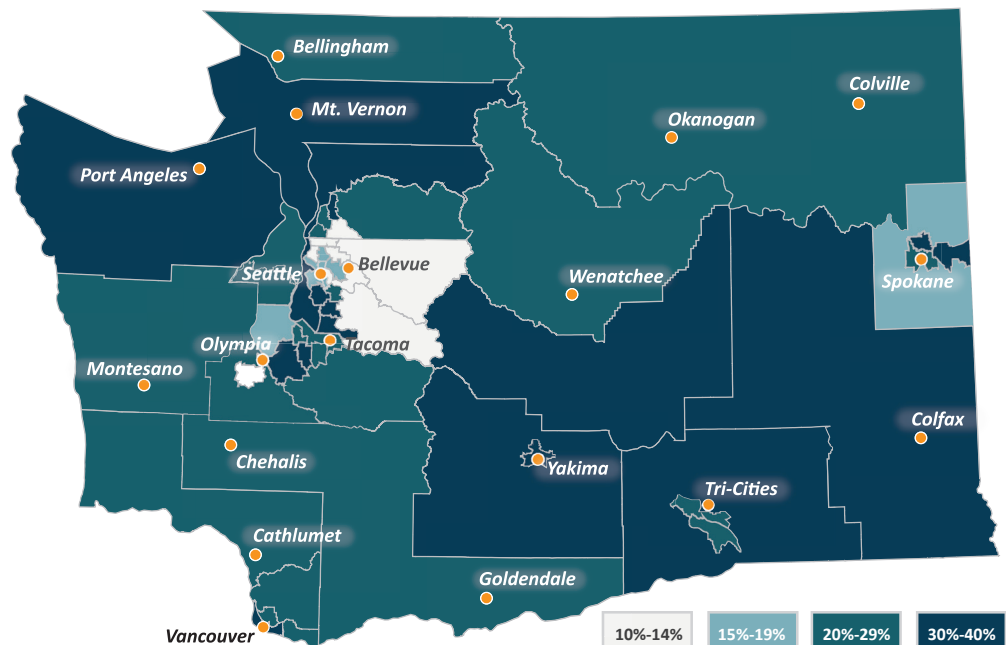
- 1 UNDO STRUCTURAL RACISM**
Understand structural racism and historical trauma and take action to undo how they manifest in state policy, program, and practice.
- 2 BALANCE POWER**
Make equal space in decision-making for people and communities most affected by poverty and inequality.
- 3 INCREASE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**
Target equitable income growth and wealth-building among people with low incomes.
- 4 ENSURE FOUNDATIONAL WELL-BEING**
Strengthen health supports across the life span to promote the intergenerational well-being of families.
- 5 PRIORITIZE URGENT NEEDS**
Prioritize the urgent needs of people experiencing homelessness, mental illness, or addiction.
- 6 BUILD A HOLISTIC CONTINUUM OF CARE**
Build an integrated human service continuum of care that addresses the holistic needs of children, adults, and families.
- 7 DECRIMINALIZE POVERTY**
Decriminalize poverty and reduce reliance on the child welfare, juvenile justice, and criminal justice systems.
- 8 PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK**
Ensure a just transition to the future of work.

1. Build interagency intention, accountability and action on the 10-Year Plan to Dismantle Poverty. With the submission of the 10-Year Plan, state poverty reduction efforts can shift toward prioritizing and implementing the 60 recommendations. This next phase of the work requires a new model for interagency collaboration and accountability to align state agencies and strategic partners to implement the 10-Year Plan and Create state accountability for closing racial, social and geographic disparities in economic well-being.

2. Create a new model to include and compensate people and communities historically excluded from social and economic well-being in state decisions. Stubbornly high rates of poverty and inequality are the product of inherently unjust and unequal policies, programs and practices that have underwritten our economy for decades. ESA is partnering with Results Washington Goal 2.1 to develop a process to elevate the influence and expertise of people and communities historically excluded from well-being in policy, program and funding decisions to guide the state toward a just and equitable future.

3. Raise and stabilize the economic floor for Washingtonians. Economic stability is foundational to mobility from poverty, as well as making progress on the state's education, health, criminal justice, child welfare, workforce development, environment and employment goals. Prototyping and scaling a state model to ensure children, adults and families can meet their foundational needs and create an economic floor that no Washingtonian can fall through is vital to our collective well-being.

Percent of People Living Below Self-Sufficiency Standard Washington State Public Use Microdata Areas, 2020



¹ Self-Sufficiency Standard; University of Washington Center for Women's Welfare.

² Self-Sufficiency Standard; University of Washington Center for Women's Welfare.

³ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2019. A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
<https://doi.org/10.17226/25246>.

Map: Source: UW Center for Women's Welfare Self-Sufficiency Standard data; Public Use Microdata Areas (PUMAs) are non-overlapping, statistical geographic areas that partition each state or equivalent entity into geographic areas containing no fewer than 100,000 people each.

